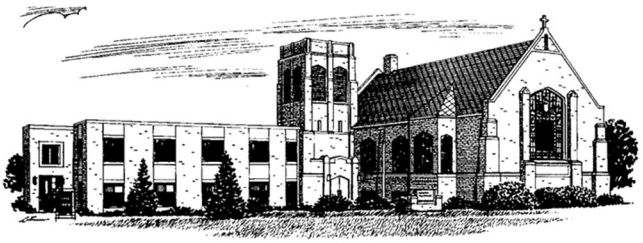
SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085



Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Summer of 2023 (began May 28):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

Fall, Winter and Spring (begins Sep 10):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR JULY 2023

"With the Spirit's gifts empower us, for the work of ministry" is the refrain we sang recently at worship. We spent a few moments thinking about and writing down how it is that we embody that work in the world. Some of that work happens close by; some of it in distant places. Whether in worship, at work, or at play, we do it as an expression of God's love for the whole world. Sometimes the work is harder than at other times. Often it can take us out of our comfort zones.

Saron offers varying opportunities for sharing how the Spirit empowers us for the work of ministry - serving in various capacities within and outside of the building. In the coming months, we will be working to strengthen our volunteer ministries that enhance our worship. You have seen and heard the beautiful musical gifts being shared weekly by individuals this summer. We will also be encouraging volunteer opportunities at worship - as readers, ushers, greeters, altar guild members, and more. There will be new training opportunities offered and "job descriptions" explained. For example, have you wondered how to sign up on the computer? Or what does it entail to close the building after worship? We will show you how. Watch for details in the weekly mailings and on Sunday mornings. And, thank you!

As Scripture tells us, *"Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. "* 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

-Pastor Joan

Did you know that you can receive weekly updates from our synod? Each week has a link to a message from Bishop Satterlee, as well as info about events around the synod. Sign up at mittensynod.org!

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kathleen & Phillip Preston are at Caretel in St. Joseph;
Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at the Willows in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

7/2 Elijah Nicholas
7/2 Kathy Bergh
7/3 Harper Brown
7/3 Ellie Hammer
7/4 Andrew Huff
7/7 Preston Akers
7/8 Elliot de la Foret
7/9 Barb Stelter
7/11 Thomas Freemire
7/11 Emmett Gray-Roll
7/11 Thatcher Gray-Roll
7/12 Scott Gaspari
7/14 Kylie Hammer
7/17 Terry Anserello
7/17 Aaron Becker
7/18 Becky Bucha
7/23 Lauren Kauffman
7/24 Ken Kohs
7/25 John Koehler
7/25 Richard Osgood
7/26 Joan Oleson
7/28 Jennifer Nicholas
7/29 Ilo Coar

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

7/3 Adam & Shavonn Bradley
7/7 Beth Gray-Roll & Marcus Roll
7/12 Judi & Rian Huff
7/14 Joseph & Katherine Ulrey
7/25 Linda & Brent Dipert
7/26 Kaitlin & Nicholas Hooper

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONGRATULATIONS

We took the joyous opportunity to bless our high school graduating seniors on May 28. We once again wish

Addison Osgood
Grant Gacek
Molly Becker

all the best in their next chapters. Your church family will always be rooting for you and eager for updates when you are home for holidays and breaks.

Congratulations, High School Class of 2023!

FORTIFY & fly

Summer is here! We celebrated many things accomplished through Fortify & Fly with an ice cream social on June 25 but not all the work has been done quite yet. Good news, the flooring has been ordered for the sanctuary, consisting of carpet for the majority of the space and a hard surface for the chancel area. We can tentatively look to July for installation which means watch for a call for volunteers soon because that furniture will need to be moved out then back in. We are also on track for the roof drainage project to begin in July or August.

As always, thank you for being with us on this journey and know that we will keep you informed until all projects are complete and all the money has been respectfully spent.

Worship

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. All are welcome!

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then **simply return the vase to Saron.**

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery Is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

July 2: 5th Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 28:5-9
Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18
Romans 6:12-23
Matthew 10:40-42

July 9: 6th Sunday after Pentecost
Zechariah 9:9-12
Psalm 145:8-14
Romans 7:15-25
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

July 16: 7th Sunday after Pentecost
Isaiah 55:10-13
Psalm 65:9-13
Romans 8:1-11
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

July 23: 8th Sunday after Pentecost
Isaiah 44:6-8
Psalm 86:11-17
Romans 8:12-25
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

July 30: 9th Sunday after Pentecost
1 Kings 3:5-12
Psalm 119:129-136
Romans 8:26-39
Matthew 13:31-22, 44-52

YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group (middle school and high school kids) typically meets once per month after a service for food, fun and fellowship. Watch your email for more information on the next gathering. Friends are always welcome!

Contact Claudia at Staude.claudia@gmail.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

See back page of newsletter for article.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

Our program year will begin again on September 10. We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

During July and August, we will do week-to-week studies, focusing on the lessons and Gospel reading for the following Sunday, with perhaps a Father Casey Cole video here and there. Hope to see you there!

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Our Bible study continues during the summer months as we gather to study the upcoming Sunday's Gospel reading. We will meet on **Thursday mornings at 9:30am** outside, at the church building. This discussion is open to all interested in attending, for one session or many. Contact Pastor Joan if you have any questions.

During the program year, we typically meet the first and third Wednesday of each month in the lounge from 7pm to 8:30pm. We'll pick up again in the fall. Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

2023-2024 1ST SUNDAY BOOK GROUP SELECTIONS

The votes are in and these are the choices for another year of good reads! Notice we added August and September to allow more opportunities for discussion.

Aug 6 Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver
Sep 10 Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus
Oct 1 Last Bus to Wisdom by Ivan Doig
Nov 5 Everything Happens For a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved by Kate Bowler
Dec 3 The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman
Feb 4 Second Glance by Jodi Pioult
Mar 3 Chronicles of a Radical Haag (with recipes) by Lorna Landvik
Apr 7 Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt
May 5 Black Cake by Charmaine Wilkerson

"Reading is a means of thinking with another person's mind: it forces you to stretch your own."
-Charles Scribner, Jr.

If you want to be on the email list, call Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will gather for dinner at **6pm on Wednesday, July 12 at Papa Vino's Restaurant** in St. Joseph. Information will be sent by email and responses to determine an accurate reservation number will be compiled closer to July 12.

If you have any questions about this event or the group, contact Melanie at 269/449-8399.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your generous support!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made, creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy. -Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On May 25, Saron members & friends, MaryAlice Brunner, Jim Manore, Lindsay Gaspari & her students from Brookview Montessori, were very busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing 104 lunches. Guests enjoyed a ham dinner, including potato salad, coleslaw, fruit, pickles, bread & homemade cookies.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

Support

The Support Committee meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Be on the lookout for sales! Beginning in August, we will once again be collecting school supplies for Leabrook School in Eau Claire.

Suggested items: pencils, crayons, markers, glue sticks, notebooks, folders, tissues, disinfecting wipes, white board markers, and gift cards to Meijer and Walmart.

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Let there be light! The facilities group replaced many of the old fixtures in the dining room.

Other Bits of Awesomeness

We've been fortunate to have many special musical offerings in June, including Mary Alice (flute), Connie (piano), Lorelei (vocal), Irma (vocal/piano) and Denise (upcoming vocal).

We proudly support the LGBTQIA+ community during Pride Month and all throughout the year. You are welcome here.

Results of June Congregational Meeting:

With a vote on June 4, the congregation supported the proposal to order new custom furniture (including altar table, pulpit, and font) which will be of the same wood and color as our pew chairs while also providing greater flexibility and accessibility in our chancel area. Memorial funds will be used for this project. Once the order is placed, it will take approximately 4-5 months for their arrival.

Summertime Thoughts on Stewardship

All things are yours . . . and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.
(1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

If a bit of Logic 101 is applied to this message from Paul, it becomes clear that we, and everything we "own," belongs to God, a concept entirely consistent with the premise that stewardship is not a "campaign" or a "season," but rather a way of life. But even that characterization falls somewhat short. Stewardship is not just a way of life; it's a good way of life. For many, it is the way to a better life.

What does it mean to belong to God? Very simply, it means allowing God to rule our lives, putting God in charge of everything, including our time and possessions. Easier said than done!

But in a devotion written for Saron's Fall 2022 stewardship focus, one of our members gave us some insights into what is entailed in our relationship with a God who loves us, guides us, guards us, and blesses us, in essence what it means to belong to God. With her permission, that inspirational message is reprised below.

Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!
(Psalm 150:6)

What motivates us to praise the Lord? God the creator of all desires to be in relationship with the creation and our longing for God is as much a part of us as our DNA.

How do we praise the Lord? Certainly, with our voices in singing of hymns and affirming our faith in the words of liturgy and I believe that we praise God each time we show love to others. With the offering of a word of welcome to a newcomer or a stranger, sharing our stories of faith, serving at the soup kitchen, working projects through God's Work Our Hands, feeding the hungry through our noisy offerings and in many other ways seen and unseen.

Each day, we live and breathe in God's unconditional love and mercy. In offering our time, talents and resources, we live and breathe our praise to God the creator.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, as we offer you our thanks and praise, stir up in us the desire to share with others all that you abundantly provide.

Denise Cook (2022)

Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe.

ELCA Synod Assembly Notes: Assembly held May 7 – 9, 2023
Attendees: Pastor Oleson, Claudia Staude, Jim Manore

There were good presentations about the following ELCA programs at assembly: ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Disaster Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), Samaritas, and Living Water Ministries.

All things Jesus Discussions: (Showing others about the beneficial ways in how Jesus affects us).

1. Discussion of a Favorite bible story and how it applies to our life
2. Table Discussion: "Life – It's About Jesus!" We each shared a time when we experienced Jesus in our home, neighborhood, workplace, or the world.
3. Table Conversation: "Good News – It's About Jesus!" People shared a one sentence, statement of good news about Jesus based on participants stories of good news.
4. I would say these discussions were practice about how to express our faith to others.

Our thoughts about the assembly:

1. We liked the theme: "All things Jesus" and how we should share the good news with others.
2. It was very interesting meeting pastors and lay people in other congregations from our synod.
3. We enjoyed learning about the activities the ELCA is involved in and how we can participate.
4. We enjoyed participating in the selection of the leaders of our synod.
5. We much enjoyed the "All things Jesus" discussions and learning the thoughts, perspectives, and ideas of the other participants.
6. We were interested in how the synod constitution was written to reflect how the church should be run, and having the opportunity to discuss and vote on any changes. This neatly tied in with the discussion of the budget, and the discussions of how the church should spend its money.
7. We found the discussion of the pros/cons concerning in-person versus virtual assembly attendance interesting. In the end, we agreed with the decision (by vote) on when to hold each type of synod assembly; where for two years the assembly would be virtual and the third would be an in-person assembly. In-person assemblies will always be held when the bishop is elected, and more often as important discussions come up. It seemed the primary reasons to hold virtual assemblies was the high costs to the synod of holding in-person assemblies and that many smaller congregations cannot afford to send voting members. In-person assemblies cost the synod considerably more than it receives in attendance fees. Attendance could be higher in virtual assemblies since participants can attend from their home churches.
8. We enjoyed seeing how the compensation guidelines for clergy were determined, and appreciated our opportunity to vote on these guidelines.
9. It was interesting hearing about the talents of different participants. Having a good bagpiper in the group, and having him perform at the assembly was enjoyable. This person sat at our table.
10. We enjoyed seeing how different people, both ministers and lay, were able to participate at various times during the meeting. Everyone had a chance to speak before votes, if they wanted.
11. It is impressive that Bishop Satterlee, being legally blind, had the ability to do his presentations and church services from memory.

Honduras Breakout Section:

1. Serving poor communities working through Lutheran Church in Honduras (ILCH). A partial purpose of the Honduras program is to reduce the reasons for migration from Honduras.
2. Honduras Initiative Activities include: providing water filters so people have good water to drink (Saron provided two filters as part of our recent Water Wells outreach initiative), teaching Honduran volunteers to provide health care, providing dental care, providing health diagnostic testing for men and women, providing HIV/AIDS testing and support, providing nutritious food for children, and teaching how to prepare healthy meals.

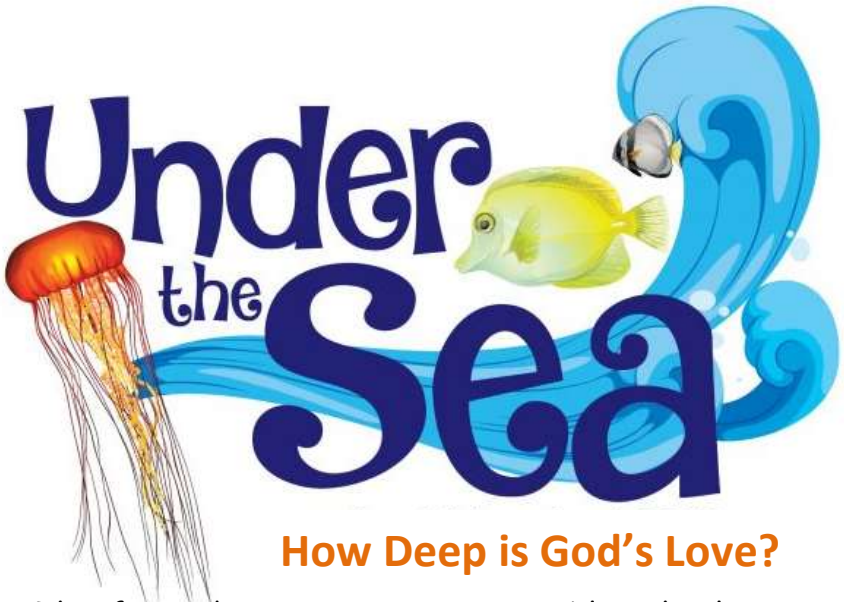
Claudia Staude and *Jim Manore*

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER



We could also use extra hands and eyes to keep things running smoothly with so many little people. Volunteer by using the link the weekly email or contact the church office.

How Deep is God's Love?

This fun and interactive Vacation Bible School experience, targeted towards kids preschool through 5th grade, will take place:

Monday, July 31 – Thursday, August 3
6:30pm – 8pm

There will be crafts, outdoor activities, lessons, music and more! Register by using the link in the weekly email or contact the church office. An invitation will be mailed and emailed to those who attended last year. We'd prefer to know who is coming by July 23 so we can have t-shirts and nametags ready but walk-ins will be warmly accepted.

July 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 **Pastor on Vacation**
2 10am Worship with Zoom Option NO Learning Hour	**3** 11am Prayer Group	**4** 6pm Bible Study	**5** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**6** 9:30am Bible Study	**7**	**8**
9 10am Worship with Zoom Option NO Learning Hour	**10** 11am Prayer Group	**11** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**12** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**13** 9:30am Bible Study	**14**	**15**
16 10am Worship with Zoom Option NO Learning Hour	**17** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Church Council **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**18** 6pm Bible Study	**19** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**20** 9:30am Bible Study	**21**	**22**
23/30 10am Worship with Zoom Option NO Learning Hour	**24/31** 11am Prayer Group **VBS** **July 31 – Aug 2** **6:30pm-8pm**	**25** 6pm Bible Study	**26** 9am Helping Hands NO Zoom Coffee	**27** 9:30am Bible Study **Soup Kitchen Day**	**28**	**29**